

Shellfish Department

August 2017

Monthly Report

Public Fishery

Late July and early August brought a lot of growth to the oysters in the harbor. All areas in the harbor have shown healthy oyster growth and decent harvest amounts. Herring River has been producing quality oysters and full bushel catches for the commercial fishermen harvesting the area. The average number of fishermen in Herring River is four per tide. A great comeback in oyster population has been witnessed in the Blackfish Creek area. Commercial shellfishermen have been getting great product and amounts per tide. The west side has had two commercial fishermen fishing the area. The west side harvesters are getting approx. two bushels per tide. Indian Neck is still the best area for oysters in the harbor and the recreational shellfishermen are taking advantage of the abundance. There have been a few complaints about lack of quahogs but we guide as best we can to better fishing locations. No quahog relays to the area have happened prior to my arrival. The dragger boat activity in the harbor has gone down since June. We received a notification from the state that there was one vibrio case in July that came from CCB11 or CCB14 for oysters consumed on July 16, 2017. The shellfish department followed up with the state and no further action was required nor are there any consequences.

Enforcement

The Shellfish Department is continuing to closely monitor exposure times in the wild fishery and working with wild harvesters on icing their product within two hours as required by the Vibrio Monument plan. There is great compliance and no issues to report at this time. In addition, the department is conducting spot checks with grant holders to make sure their product is adequately iced. Again, compliance is not an issue.

There were minor oyster size violations in the recreational fishery. All undersized oysters were returned to water, and we educated the violators, who were grateful to better understand the reasoning for the limits.

State Relations

The Shellfish Advisory Board met to discuss the use of Chinese hats in Chipman's Cove to collect spat. Current regulations state that hats must come out of the cove by Sept. 15 each year. Due to fall spawning, which presents an opportunity to collect a late round of spat, we decided to ask the state to be able to amend our regulations to have a later date of October 20th each year for hat removal. The Board of Selectmen approved a letter with this request, and it was submitted to the state. The shellfish department submitted its own letter as well. We are waiting for feedback.

Education

Deputy Constable Chris Manulla organized a visit from The University of Maryland, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the Oyster Recovery Partnership on August 10th. They wanted to learn Wellfleet's shellfishery, both wild and farmed, in order to help them in their efforts to create more aquaculture in their waters. They also wanted to better understand the relationship between town officials and fishermen. Assistant Constable John Mankevetch gave them many details and discussed differences between our fishery and theirs. Manulla brought grant holder Ethan Estey, who is also a Ph.D. in fisheries and aquaculture, to speak with them as well. Both sides learned a lot from the discussion and a fruitful partnership has been established.

News

I started the Constable position on August 10 and have been spending most of my time on patrol with my colleagues in the shellfish department. They have been instrumental in my education process, much of which is focusing on the Vibrio management plan at this time. I have learned to navigate on the beach and received some basic boat education. I have patrolled the recreational area on both Sunday and Wednesday, learning the ropes about interacting with the public. I have been introduced to many wild fishermen and grant holders, and have been getting positive feedback to date. I highly value the learning opportunities and experience sharing that they are offering me.

Looking ahead, I will be creating a packet of information to give to all grant holders as part of the annual inspection process. We will be visiting Egg Island next Thursday August 24th to assess next steps in what has been identified as a problem area.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Civetta
Shellfish Constable